1979

State Humanities Committees (1979-1982): Correspondence 22

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Federation of Public Programs in the Humanities

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August 23, 1979

The Honorable Claiborne Pell
U. S. Senate
325 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Pell:

We continue to receive information and correspondence from the state humanities programs about the possible ramifications of Senate Bill 1386 in the various states. So that you can be aware of the various points which they make, I attach letters from Arizona, Delaware, Kansas, Oregon and Puerto Rico, and we will forward to you any others which we may receive.

Cordially,

Betsy K. McCreight
Vice Chair,
Federation Executive Committee
and
Chair,
Humanities Foundation of
West Virginia

BKMC:jle

Enclosures

ARIZONA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

in cooperation with the National Endowment for the Humanities

July 25, 1979

Ms. Betsy McCreight
Vice Chair
Executive Committee
Federation of Public Programs in the Humanities
15 South Fifth St., Suite 720
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402

Dear Betsy:

I am sorry that the letter that I undertook to write you after our telephone conversation was crowded out of my mind by other matters until now. I hope that this letter will still reach you in time for your meeting.

I am writing in response to your request for observations about how the various state legislatures might respond to the requirement that the humanities committees become state agencies. Such a conclusion would be a disaster in this state, in the opinion of every one of us who has ever had anything to do with the Humanities Council. In this state, the arts commission not only carries "arts and humanities" in its title, but the enabling legislation also gives it responsibility for the arts and the humanities in this state. Each year, they have an enormous struggle to maintain an appropriation from the legislature. Annually, they have to call on all their friends in the state who have any interest in the arts or music to assist in a massive lobbying effort, because there is so much resistance to their existence.

This resistance stems from several philosophies, I would say. One is a feeling that the arts are an esoteric aspect to life which those who enjoy them should pay for themselves. Secondly, hostility has been raised in the hearts and minds of some legislators because, for example, a Steinbeck play was performed in the rotunda of the state capitol once, using Commission funds, which contained four-letter words; and a writers' workshop which they supported brought a lesbian poet to the state as a participant. Doubtless other more reasoned objections exist, but the upshot is that their financial position is annually insecure and one year, an effort was made to repeal the bill which supports their existence altogether.

An interesting thing has occurred recently which dramatizes even more clearly the position in which the Arizona Humanities Council would find itself if it were to become a state agency. For many years since the organization of our group, we have been trying to get the Arizona Commission on the Arts and Humanities to drop "humanities" from their title. For whatever combination of reasons, they have never been receptive to the idea. My guess is that they would have to go back to the legislature for changes in the law, which describes their name and their responsibilities; and under the circumstances, no one could blame them for not wishing to open up what could be a can of worms. Nonetheless, we found to our surprise, within the past six months, that they are dropping the word "humanities" from their letterhead, from their way of answering the telephone, and from their newsletter. It turns out that they are engaged in a mad scramble now to disassociate themselves from us because we and the programs which we fund are becoming sufficiently visible that people are confusing them with us instead of the reverse, which was true in the earlier years of our operation.

Last fall, we funded a conference on abortion which was one of the most successful humanistic programs we have ever supported. The visiting main speaker, Dr. James Mohr of the University of Maryland, a distinguished student of the history of abortion, said that he knew of nowhere else in the country where the subject had been discussed on such a high level. Dr. Mohr wrote an article about the conference which appeared in our newsletter, under the caption "Abortion Conference a Success." Apparently, when representatives of the Arizona Commission on the Arts and Humanities appeared before the Appropriations Committee or Subcommittee last spring, several members of the legislature were waving around our newsletter in anger and threatening to withhold any state dollars at all from the Arts Commission because of their dealing with such an unsavory subject. Although they were able to successfully persuade their detractors that we, and not they, had supported that conference, the truth is that they came within one vote this year of getting no appropriation at all.

If we all believe, as was suggested by Jim Veninga's report, that "public reflection upon government and upon the relationship between government and society" is best served by "organizations that need not fear governmental

interference," one must acknowledge that we would be in trouble in Arizona. A member of the legislature serves on our Council. I had hoped that he would write you himself of his views on this subject, but have been unable to get an answer from him so I conclude that he must be out of the state. He has expressed himself in no uncertain terms about the undesirability of having our program come under the state structure.

When he returns to the state, perhaps he will write you then. In addition, our Chairman and I are expecting to meet with the Governor later in the summer. I hope this is useful information for you.

Sincerely,

Lorraine

Lorraine W. Frank
Executive Director

LWF/cww

JUL 30 1979

Delaware Humanities Forum

2600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Wilmington, Delaware 19806 • Rona G. Finkelstein, Director 738-8491

July 24, 1979

TO: Betsy McCreight

FROM: Rona G. Finkelstein

Subject: 1980 NEH Reauthorization: Delaware's Probable Response to Senator Pell's Bill

DHC members and staff have contacted several persons in the Delaware Legislature and/or knowledgeable about it, to find out their opinions of what would happen to the Humanities Program if it could only be implemented through a state agency, as Senator Pell's bill requires. Since the responses were received by telephone, there are no letters to send you, nor in most cases direct quotes. We have given summaries, using the person's own words as far as possible.

1. Senator Nancy Cook, Vice-Chair Finance Committee. (The Finance Committee Chairperson could not be reached.) She felt that it was unlikely that the State Legislature would be willing to create a new state agency to house a State Humanities Program. She recommended sticking with the volunteer committees.

2. Senator Daniel Weiss. Weiss was more familiar with the program than Senator Cook, since he had served in more than one program. He stated that "selling the governor and the legislature on creating a new state agency would be awfully difficult - near impossible." He pointed out that the governor has taken the position that the state government should be trimmed back, and a year from now he will be campaigning on that policy, which is just the reverse of what they would need to create a new agency. The makeup of the legislature being what it is, the only way he can see it being accomplished would be as the result of a strong push by the administration. This, however, would not be enough, since several programs pushed by the governor, such as "Jobs for Delaware Graduates," did not materialize. They would not even have been debated, however, had the administration not backed them forcefully.

Opposition to funding a new agency by the legislature rests not only on the funds required, which might be minimal, but also on the philosophical position of many legislators and the governor that government is already involved in too many things. Weiss personally believes, and he thinks many join him, that the state has "an unbelievable knack for screwing up whatever it touches." Further, "things that have gotten along well without our help ought to stay that way."

3. Sandra Worthen, Assistant to the Governor on Education; Former State Representative. Ms. Worthen is also fairly knowledgeable about DHF, having participated in some programs. She thought that it would be very difficult to get the legislators interested in establishing a new agency, and in particular one that was "culturally oriented." She noted that the Delaware Arts Council has had problems in the past obtaining state funding.

4. Elizabeth Homsey, Former State Archivist. She cautioned the Council not to assume that by becoming a state agency the work of the Humanities Forum would continue unchanged. By being absorbed into the state system, the Humanities Forum would probably be absorbed into an existing department whose own priorities would take precedence. The main attraction to the state to include the Humanities Forum would be the federal funds it would bring in.Once part of the state system, control of the funds would be in the hands of a public administrator. (Ms. Homsey said this knowing how Council currently grants its funds. She is a former DHC member.)

5. Lawrence Henry, Director, Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, State of Delaware. The Delaware Arts Council was placed within the last two years under the division headed by Dr. Henry. Dr. Henry made an interesting statement when interviewed earlier this year by the Ad Hoc Committee for the purpose of surveying humanities resources and needs in the state. His statement bears on the question what new direction the Delaware Humanities Council should take, and what humanities needs in the state it could fulfill: (Interviewer's summary of Henry's response)
"In some places there is a Council on the Arts and Humanities instead of separate agencies. The opportunities in Delaware to develop an integrated program are immense. The Arts Council gets both federal and state funds, the Humanities Forum, federal aid alone. It would make sense to put the administrations together for economy, and get more public appeal by having everything cultural in one organization. We should begin to talk about integrating them." (3/23/79)

It appears that a majority of the members of the DHC Executive Committee would prefer to keep the volunteer committees. The full Council will be discussing the question at its meeting August 1.

RGF:mw

CC: Dr. Steven Weiland

AUG 08 1979

August 6, 1979

Mr. B.J. Stiles
Director, Division of State Programs
National Endowment for the Humanities
806 15th St. N.W.
Mail Stop 404
Washington, D.C. 20506

Dear Mr. Stiles:

At a meeting held July 13, the members of the Executive Committee of the Kansas Committee for the Humanities discussed at length the proposal currently under consideration related to the 1980 reauthorization of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Our discussions centered particularly on material in a memorandum dated July 6, titled "1980 NEH Reauthorization," prepared by Betsy K. McCreight, Vice-chair, Federation Executive Committee.

After considerable talk, trying to be certain that we understood the issues, the KCH Executive Committee settled on the following observations, which they have directed me to transmit to you. First, and of less immediate concern to us for purposes of this letter, is the proposed legislation S. 1386, providing that the state committees be transformed into state agencies. The present arrangement has created, in our case at least, a truly democratic committee composition, representing a variety of interests in the humanities and all areas of the state as well as a balance between academic humanists and the public interests. The volunteer spirit of the committee might well disappear if the committee were seated behind an agency door. That spirit of volunteering gives state committees a lively and dedicated profile.

Our major concerns, however, arose over the OMB proposal (as outlined in the memo), especially those revisions that relate directly to state committees and in particular those points which affect the "funding formula." We have serious reservations that the discretionary funds available to the NEH Chairman for making grants to the state committees, should be increased from the current 25% to 50% by FY1985. We are unable to understand how such an increase in discretionary funds works to the advantage of state committees. We can, on the other hand, imagine circumstances in which competition among the states for awards from those discretionary funds could result in unpleasant and unproductive situations for the states and for the Chairman. We see the need for further rationale for the increased flexibility for the Chairman.

Further, there is concern about the three criteria the Chairman may use for increasing basic awards to the states. We are in agreement that "quality and focus" should be a primary factor in determining funding levels. Yet that phrase may be too general to be useful in establishing accountability. We urge a clearer definition of that criteria and that state committees have a voice in determining the standards against which quality and focus will be judged.

The second criteria - "levels of State appropriations to the grant recipient" - seems inappropriate for the majority of state committees, since it assumes a comparison with state arts agencies. Beyond that point, however, there is no mention of what the possible relationship might be between NEH funding and State appropriations to a state committee. For example, will a NEH award to a committee increase or decrease in relationship to an appropriation from the State?

Finally, the third criteria - "State population" - is a worrisome criteria for us. Population is a definable factor and we worry that this third criteria could become the sole criterion, since the others are more general and less definable. We recognize that a state's population might play a role in an award, but we are concerned that the import of this criteria would be to increase appropriations to populus states and decrease or hold stable awards to less populated states. This approach would not take into account such factors as distances or availability to humanistic resources, all of which affect the ability of less populated states to administer high-quality humanities programs on stable or reduced awards.

The Executive Committee will continue to study the proposed funding formula and other aspects of the reauthorization process, with the goal of evaluating alternative approaches and ramifications. We offer the above observations in the spirit of cooperation, as representatives of a state committee committed to a reasonable and equitable administration of a national humanities program.

We would appreciate an opportunity to be involved continually in the discussion of reauthorization and in defining and designing any criteria in the funding formula.

Cordially,

Marion Cott (ckl)

Marion Cott
Executive Director

ckl

cc: Betsy K. McCreight
Vice-chair, Executive Committee
Federation of Public Programs in the Humanities

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JUL. 23 1979

July 16, 1979

Miss Betsy McCreight
Vice Chair Federation Executive Committee
Chair, Humanities Foundation of West Virginia
Federation of Public Programs in the Humanities
15 South 5th St., Suite 720
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402

Dear Betsy:

With reference to your letter of July 13, 1979, I should like to inform you that the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico has had since 1955, a state agency devoted to the promotion of the humanities and the arts: the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. The Institute has done exemplary work in these fields. The present, as well as the former directors are members of our Board, and our Foundation has given grants to the Institute, particularly in regard to its program outside the metropolitan area.

Our Board, on the other hand, has emphasized its private character and has been able to deal with all groups, carefully avoiding the political arena, and covering areas not covered by the Institute.

Puerto Rico certainly does not need another state agency to achieve NEH's objectives. This is a case where another agency will involve not only duplication, but the destruction of an initiative that has borne fruitful results. Many of us will stop our involvement and full support if politics begin playing here a predominant role in the NEH program. It is as simple as that.

I thought you would like to have my personal reaction.

Sincerely,

Arturo Morales-Carrión
Executive Director

JUL 23 1979

OREGON COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES

Richard Lewis, Director
Carolyn Buan, Associate Director
Argentina de Erdman, Program Associate

July 18, 1979

Betsy McCreight, Vice Chairman
Federation of Public Programs in the Humanities
15 South Fifth Street - Room 720
Minneapolis, Minnestoa 55402

Dear Betsy:

This is in reply to your memo regarding the OMB proposed new formula for distributing funds to the State committees. Oregon is opposed to the formula for the following reasons:

1. The likely effect on our program will be a significant reduction in overall funds. This means two things. First, administrative costs are increasing and regardless of our size relative to other states, we cannot do with less administrative money. As it is we must fund raise to stay even. Thus, the formula means that the ratio of our administrative spending to grant funds will go up (it is already over 30 percent, a fact that angered Rep. Robert Duncan who sits on the House Appropriations Committee). Second, at the same time that we are being urged by the National Council to generate more statewide demand on our resources, they would be going down.

2. The first two criteria for distributing the Chairman's increase in discretionary funds are vague and, in the case of criterion (i), coercive.

   Criterion (i), "quality and focus of programs." The new directions made possible by the '76 legislation have caused the NEH some legitimate concern about how each state exercises that authority. However, it clearly violates the intent of the '76 legislation for the Chairman (i.e., the Division of State Programs) to govern how state committees focus their programs, especially since that word could mean anything from geographical distribution to funding options.

   Criterion (ii), "levels of State appropriations to the grant recipients." How this is to guide the Chairman is unclear. Presumably it means that state programs receiving some state appropriation would qualify for

additional NEH funding though state support would seem to make less federal help necessary. If it means that the Endowment would reduce the amount of definite funds to programs receiving state support, then the formula amounts to a disincentive. In any event, this criterion bases the award of funds on a circumstance that has little to do with the quality of the program or administrative practice.

3. The percentage of discretionary funds ultimately reserved to the Chairman (50 percent) is more than is needed in order to achieve equity.

At the April meeting the Chairman said that his recommendations to Congress on the reauthorization would be to give the '76 legislation more time to prove itself. This funding formula amendment is at least as premature as Senator-Pell's amendment. More time is needed to explore a funding formula that is fair to the large states without drastically reducing smaller states' resources and that more equitably balances the Endowment's concern for supervision with each state's necessary and proper degree of autonomy.

Very truly yours,

Richard Lewis
Director

Mary T. Winch
Chair